

THE CHANGING OF $s \rightarrow h \rightarrow \emptyset$ IN PUNJABI¹

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Abstract: *The paper deals with two interrelated sound changes in progress in Punjabi. The progression of these sound changes, i.e. $s \rightarrow h$ and $h \rightarrow \emptyset$, seemed to be chronologically differentiable. The paper also raises certain questions regarding the sequential (linear) operation of these sound changes.*

The present discussion focuses its attention on two interrelated sound changes that are found in Punjabi. They are:

- (i) $s \rightarrow h$
- (ii) $h \rightarrow \emptyset$

The following examples illustrate these changes:

- (i) $s \rightarrow h$ *sIndu* 'inhabitant of Sind' \rightarrow *hIndu*
 trISnaa 'thirst' \rightarrow *tIS* \rightarrow *teh*
 wIS 'poison' \rightarrow *wIs* \rightarrow *weh*
 Swaas 'breath' \rightarrow *sah*

(cf. Chander 1959: 164, 190)

- (ii) $h \rightarrow \emptyset$ $h\varepsilon$ 'is' $\rightarrow \varepsilon$
 $ha\tilde{a}$ 'yes' $\rightarrow a\tilde{a}$
 hi 'emphatic' $\rightarrow i$

(cf. *ibidem*: 180)

The first sound change is more traceable among the Iranian languages. We find a regular correspondence between the Indo-Aryan s sound and the Iranian h sound. In point of fact, the changing of s to h is a continuation of a process that had taken place in the early history of the Indo-Iranian group. The second change, i.e. $h \rightarrow \emptyset$, is more common among the Indo-Aryan languages, particularly in Punjabi where h , like voiced aspirated sounds bh , dh , jh , Dh , gh , has converged with *tones* (cf. Gill and Gleason 1969:51).

The Punjabi language mainly draws its vocabulary either from MIA, for instance, (Skt) *adya* 'today' \rightarrow (MLA) *ajju* \rightarrow (Pbi) *ajj*; (Skt) *carma* 'leather' \rightarrow (MLA) *camma* \rightarrow (Pbi) *cam*, or from Persian, for instance, we find in Punjabi (Per) *hafta* 'seven days time' instead of (Skt) *sapta*. So the changing of $s \rightarrow h$ is in no way an innovation which we find exclusively in the Punjabi language. The changing of $s \rightarrow h$ is more or less a pan-Indian linguistic process traceable in majority of Indian languages.

One would like to know whether these sound changes in progress are simultaneous or sequentially (chronologically) differentiatable in Punjabi. The simultaneous nature of these changes are hardly tenable as the Punjabi language traces a good number of such lexical items in which h has not yet changed into \emptyset , i.e. *tones*. For example, *saaDaa*, 'our' \rightarrow *haaDaa*, *pasu* 'animal' \rightarrow *pahu*, etc. Then the other alternative is most probable. In a way these changes are taking place side by side in which the outcome of former, i.e. $s \rightarrow h$, becomes the input of latter one, i.e. $h \rightarrow \emptyset$. If linear sequence of the occurrence of these two changes

is accepted, then, another related question arises about the occurrence of *h* in all the three environments.

It has been usually viewed that the glottal *h* has lost its consonantal status in word-final position in all the dialects of Punjabi, and has converged with *tone*. As per Gill and Gleason (1969:51), non-initial *h* normally has no consonantal value, but represents high tone $\acute{}$ on its preceding vowel. It relates to their non-acceptance of *h* being a sound occurring in word-final and word-medial positions. Joshi (1980:39) has also passed a similar judgement on it claiming that glottal *h* in the Majhi dialect of Punjabi occurs exclusively in word-initial position. In other dialects, such as Doabi, Malwai, and Poadi, glottal *h* does occur in word-medial position.

According to the point of angles adhered by these linguists, it could be concluded that :

- i) *h* does not occur in word-final position in all the Punjabi dialects: and
- ii) *h*, in the Majhi dialect, occurs exclusively in word-initial position, whereas, in other dialects, it does occur word-initially and word-medially as well.

But, if, we observe the progression of changing of *s* to *h* and then getting lost in favour of tones, we see that there are a good number of such lexical items which has gone through the first phase of this sound shift (i.e. $s \rightarrow h$), but have not yet experienced the second one, particularly in the Majhi dialect of Punjabi. It relates to a linguistic situation very much conducive for the occurrence of *h* in all three environments, especially in a dialect regarding which statements were used to made repeatedly that this dialect does not permit the occurrence of *h* word- finally (pre-pausally) and word-medially. In this paper, it is claimed that *h*, in the Majhi dialect, does occur in word-final and word-medial positions, exclusively in those lexical items in which *s*

is changed or getting changed in favour of h , but have not yet gone through the second phase of this change (i.e. $h \rightarrow \emptyset$). Lexical diffusionists, who advocate the view that a sound change in progress is lexically observable, have succeeded in proposing a three stage progression of lexical diffusion in every speech community, i.e. unchanged or U-words, in initial stage, V-words or words that exhibit variable pronunciation in the intermediate stage, and changed or C-words in the final stage (Wang 1982:35).

If we look at data presented in Tables 1.1-3, it becomes explicit that the concerned sound change exhibits initial two stages of its progression, i.e. unchanged words and variable words. There is a tendency among Punjabi speakers, particularly of this dialect, to change h into *tones* in all the three environments of a word, but the back feeding of h is not through changing of s to h , rather original h sound gets converged with tone frequently. Out of one hundred and five items, collected from nine speakers² belonging to the Majhi dialect, where s occurred in all the three environments:

Lexical items	Subjects' reference								
	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	S-6	S-7	S-8	S-9
<i>saaDe</i> 'our'	<i>h-</i>	<i>s-</i>			<i>s-</i>		<i>h-</i>		<i>s-</i>
<i>saanũ</i> 'to us'	<i>h-</i>		<i>s-</i>					<i>s-</i>	
<i>saaDi</i> 'our'	<i>h-</i>						<i>h-</i>		
<i>saaDe</i> „	<i>s-</i>	<i>s-</i>			<i>h-</i>		<i>h-</i>	<i>h-</i>	
<i>saaDe</i> „	<i>s-</i>	<i>s-</i>			<i>h-</i>		<i>h-</i>	<i>h-</i>	
<i>saaDi</i> „	<i>h-</i>		<i>s-</i>						
<i>si</i> 'was'	<i>h-</i>	<i>s-</i>	<i>s-</i>	<i>s-</i>		<i>h-</i>	<i>h-</i>	<i>h-</i>	<i>h-</i>
<i>si</i> 'was'	<i>h-</i>	<i>s-</i>				<i>h-</i>	<i>h-</i>		
<i>saaDe</i> 'our'	<i>h-</i>				<i>h-</i>				
<i>saaDe</i> „	<i>h-</i>						<i>h-</i>		
<i>saaDe</i> „	<i>h-</i>						<i>h-</i>		
<i>saanũ</i> 'to us'	<i>h-</i>						<i>h-</i>		
<i>si</i> 'was'							<i>h-</i>		
<i>saab</i> 'Sir'		<i>s-</i>			<i>s-</i>			<i>s-</i>	
<i>saariaã</i> 'all'		<i>s-</i>							
<i>sattaã</i> 'seven' (OBL)	<i>s-</i>	<i>s-</i>							
<i>saari</i> 'all'			<i>s-</i>					<i>s-</i>	
<i>saal</i> 'year'			<i>s-</i>					<i>s-</i>	
<i>sut</i> 'cotton'				<i>s-</i>					
<i>sutRi</i> 'cotton string'				<i>s-</i>					
<i>SUru</i> 'start'				<i>s-</i>					
<i>sige</i> 'was' (they)						<i>h-</i>			
<i>sige</i> „ „						<i>h-</i>			
<i>sigaa</i> „ (he)						<i>h-</i>		<i>h-</i>	
<i>sigi</i> „ (she)						<i>h-</i>			
<i>sigaa</i> „ (he)						<i>h-</i>		<i>s-</i>	
<i>SUaaraa</i> 'dry date'							<i>s-</i>		
<i>saal</i> 'year'							<i>s-</i>		
<i>sUkdaa</i> 'dries'							<i>s-</i>		
<i>sIweaã</i> 'graveyard' (OBL)							<i>s-</i>		
<i>saãe</i> 'engagement'							<i>s-</i>		
<i>sO</i> 'hundred'							<i>s-</i>		
<i>saare</i> 'all'								<i>s-</i>	

Table 1.1 (*s* → *h* / # --)

Lexical items	Subjects' reference								
	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	S-6	S-7	S-8	S-9
<i>asī</i> 'we'	-h-	-h-					-h-	-h-	-h-
<i>asī</i> „	-h-						-h-		-h-
<i>kIse</i> 'somebody'	-h-								
<i>pEse</i> 'money'	-h-								
<i>asī</i> 'we'									-h-
<i>tUsaā</i> 'you' (OBL)					-h-				
<i>waaste</i> 'for'					-h-	-h-			
<i>waaste</i> „					-h-	-h-			
<i>tUsī</i> 'you'							-h-		
<i>tUsī</i> „							-h-		
<i>tUsī</i> „							-h-		
<i>dasaā</i> 'ten' (OBL)							-h-		
<i>hasde</i> 'laughs'							Ø/h		
<i>asī</i> 'we'									-h-
<i>pasu</i> 'animal'								-h-	
<i>asī</i> 'we'									-h-
<i>asī</i> „									-h-
<i>asī</i> „									-h-
<i>maSak</i> 'leathern water bag'									-c-
<i>kass</i> 'tie'		-h-			-h				
<i>kUS</i> 'some'		-S							-c
<i>das</i> 'ten'			-h				-h		
<i>Is</i> 'this'				-s					
<i>Is</i> „				-s					
<i>ras</i> 'rope'									-c
<i>ras</i> „									-c
<i>ras</i> „									-c
<i>ras</i> „									-c

Table 1.2 *s*→*h* / -- #, *v*-*v*/*c*

three (7-9) to age group III (above 56). Subjects with the numbers 1,3,4,6,7,8 and 9 are male, and remaining are female. Subjects with the numbers 2,5,7,8 and 9 are illiterate, 1,4 and 6 are matriculate, and the subject number 3 is a graduate.

References

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- Joshi, S.S. 1980. pānjaabi wIakarn ate dhuni jUgat. *Pakha Sanjam*, XIII: 36-42.
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The first two examples explore the probability of *h* to get changed into *low tone*, and an initial vowel carrying *low tone* is very much peculiar to Majhi dialect of Punjabi, whereas, on the other hand, other dialects do not entertain to it. In the next two examples, the probability of *h* getting changed in favour of tone is marginal and in the last two examples, the changing of *h* to tone does not seem, phonetically, possible, especially in the lexical items where *h* occurs finally, and the penultimate segment in the word is a *schwa* sound. It relates the linguistic environment very much conducive for the retention of final *h* in the pronunciation.

Notes

1. Here, the changing of *h* → denotes that *h* has lost its consonantal status. Though it is being compensated with tones, it is not always true. For instance, *haã* 'yes' → *aã*. So should not be confused with tones. Abbreviations and diacritic marks used in this paper stand for:

MLA	= Middle Indo-Aryan
Skt	= Sanskrit
Pbi	= Punjabi
Per	= Persian
S	= subject
OBL	= oblique form
\	= low tone
/	= high tone
*	= indicates hypothetical form
~	= nasalization

2. The language sample is drawn solely from the Majhi dialect as other dialects, viz. Doabi, Poadi, Malwai, do not share with this change. Out of nine speakers, first three (1-3) belong to age group I (15-30), second three (4-6) to age group II (31-55) and the last

In this way, the study disproves the hypothesis of the non-occurrence of glottal h in the word-final position as well as in word-medial position, especially in the Majhi dialect of Punjabi, and claims that glottal h is fully audible as a consonant word-finally and word-medially in this dialect and its occurrence remains exclusively confined to those lexical items which have experienced the change of $s \rightarrow h$. It has been plained afore that this particular sound change ($s \rightarrow h \rightarrow \emptyset$) is in progress not simultaneously but is sequentially differentiable, i.e. (i) $s \rightarrow h$ (ii) $h \rightarrow \emptyset$. The applicability of the second phase of this particular change is more frequent in word-initial position and less frequent in word-medial and word-final positions. Though there is prevalent tendency prevailing in Punjabi language of converting h into tones when it occurs word-medially and word-finally. But in relation to this particular change, h when occurs non-initially, is relatively less vulnerable to getting lost in favour of tones. However, obviously, the probability of h to get merged with tone, in this particular environment, can not be bypassed.

In the chronological preference of changing of h to zero (i.e. tone), the word-initial position of its occurrence takes precedence over the word-medial and word-final positions, that is to say that the changing of h to tone would take place initially in word-initial position and then non-initial ones. Observe the following examples:

i) <i>saare</i>	'all' \rightarrow	<i>haare</i> \rightarrow	* <i>a`are</i>
ii) <i>saaDe</i>	'our' \rightarrow	<i>haaDe</i> \rightarrow	* <i>a`aDe</i>
iii) <i>asĩ</i>	'we' \rightarrow	<i>ahĩ</i> \rightarrow	* <i>aĩ</i>
iv) <i>pEse</i>	'money' \rightarrow	<i>pEhe</i> \rightarrow	* <i>pE`e</i>
v) <i>das</i>	'ten' \rightarrow	<i>dah</i> \rightarrow	?
vi) <i>ras</i>	'rope' \rightarrow	<i>rah</i> \rightarrow	?

ii) $s \rightarrow h$ (final position)

das 'ten' → *dah* S-3

kas 'tight' → *kah* S-5

ras 'rope' → *rac* S-9

kUS 'some' → *kUč̣* S-9

None of the speakers has showed a tendency of converting *h* into *tones* in either linguistic environment. It relates to the two stage progression of lexical diffusion of sound change, i.e. unchanged words (maintenance of original *s* in pronunciation) and variable words (alternative usage of *s* and *h*). The third stage of progression (i.e. changed words) or the second phase of this particular change (i.e. $h \rightarrow \emptyset$) has, probably, not yet started. The progression of this sound shift seems, currently confined to the first stage, i.e. of *s* getting lost in favour of *h*. For example, two speech segments are given below to authenticate the linear sequence of the occurrence of this sound shift ($s \rightarrow h$; $h \rightarrow \emptyset$) and to show how come two conflicting phonological processes are in progress simultaneously, i.e. converting *h* into *tones* and regaining it by converting *s* into *h*. Observe the following examples:

i) *haaDe khú Ûndaa higaa* S-8

our well happens was

'We have had a well'

ii) *lokki àhde Ûnde san* S-7

people (OBL) laugh happen was

'The people used to laugh at'

àhde (original word is *hasde*) in example (ii) is a fantastic instance which alone explains the entire phenomenon. Initial *h* is dropped in favour of *low tone*, and medial *s* is converted into *h*. It relates the simultaneity of occurrence of two conflicting phonological processes (*àhde Ûnde* < *hasde hUnde*).

The remaining four subjects, either replaced the original sound s with h in all the lexical items or retained it. For example:

i) <i>saanu</i>	'to us' →	<i>saanu</i>	S-3
<i>si</i>	'was' →	<i>si</i>	S-3
ii) <i>saaDe</i>	'our' →	<i>saaDe</i>	S-2
<i>saal</i>	'year' →	<i>saal</i>	S-2
iii) <i>sut</i>	'cotten' →	<i>sut</i>	S-4
<i>sutRi</i>	'cotten string' →	<i>SutRi</i>	S-4
iv) <i>sigaa</i>	'was' →	<i>higaa</i>	S-6
<i>si</i>	'was' →	<i>hi</i>	S-6
<i>sigi</i>	'was' →	<i>higi</i>	S-6

Similarly, thirty six lexical items in which s occurred non-initially were isolated of which, only three maintain the pronunciation of s , and in remaining thirty three lexical items, s is replaced either by h or by c . For example:

i) $s \rightarrow h$ (medial position)

<i>asĩ</i>	'we' →	<i>ahĩ</i>	S-1
<i>kIse</i>	'someone' →	<i>kIhe/kohe</i>	S-1
<i>pEse</i>	'money' →	<i>pEhe</i>	S-1
<i>waaste</i>	'for' →	<i>waahte</i>	S-5
<i>waaste</i>	'for' →	<i>waahte</i>	S-6
<i>tUsi</i>	'you' (OBL) →	<i>tUhi</i>	S-7
<i>hasde</i>	'laughs' →	<i>àhde</i>	S-7
<i>pasu</i>	'animal' →	<i>pahu</i>	S-8
<i>maSak</i>	'leathern water bag' →	<i>macak</i>	S-9

Subjects' reference	Frequency of occurrence of <i>s</i> (initially)	Pronounced as			Frequency of occurrence of <i>s</i> (medially/finally)	Pronounced as		
		<i>s</i> -	<i>h</i> -	<i>c</i> -		<i>s</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>c</i>
S-1	13	3	10	-	5	-	5	-
S-2	7	7	-	-	3	1	2	-
S-3	6	6	-	-	1	-	1	-
S-4	5	5	-	-	2	2	-	-
S-5	5	1	4	-	2	-	2	-
S-6	9	-	9	-	3	-	3	-
S-7	20	8	12	-	8	-	8	-
S-8	8	4	4	-	3	-	3	-
S-9	2	1	1	-	13	-	7	6

Table 1.3 Quantitative figure of *s* becoming *h*

The pronunciation of original *s* is retained only in thirty two items. In rest of the lexical items, it is replaced either with *h* or with *c*. Out of seventy lexical items with an initial *s*, forty are replaced with *h*. Five subjects have exhibited variable pronunciation alternatively using *s* and *h* for original *s*. For example:

<i>saaDaa</i>	'our'	→	<i>haaDaa</i>	S-1
<i>saaDe</i>	'our'	→	<i>saaDe</i>	S-1
<i>si</i>	'was'	→	<i>hi</i>	S-1
<i>saab</i>	'Sir'	→	<i>Saab</i>	S-5
<i>saaDe</i>	'our'	→	<i>haaDe</i>	S-5
<i>si</i>	'was'	→	<i>hi</i>	S-7
<i>saal</i>	'year'	→	<i>saal</i>	S-7
<i>sigaa</i>	'was'	→	<i>higaa</i>	S-8
<i>saanu</i>	'to us'	→	<i>saanu</i>	S-8
<i>si</i>	'was'	→	<i>hi</i>	S-9
<i>saaDe</i>	'our'	→	<i>SaaDe</i>	S-9